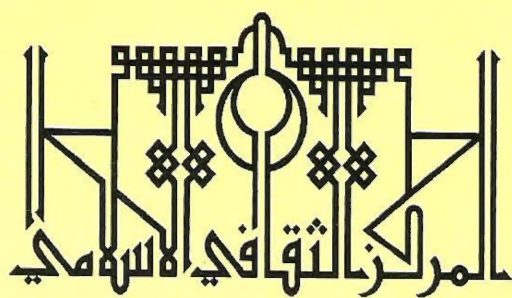


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*The Editor wishes to emphasise that views expressed  
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### NOTES TO CONTRIBUTORS:

Contributors are requested to submit their papers in digital format via email to [iq@iccuk.org](mailto:iq@iccuk.org). Materials will only be accepted in Microsoft word format, using 'Times New Roman' for both the text and transliteration symbols and 'Traditional Arabic' for Arabic texts. Submitted papers shall contain the writer's name and a brief resume.

## An Assessment of Darul Uloom Deoband

Zubair Zafar Khan\*

In 1857, the British East India Company put down with a heavy hand the independence movement begun by disparate north Indian forces, conducted in the name of the otherwise powerless Bahadur Shah Zafar. Emperor Zafar became the last Mughal Emperor. He was deposed the following year and exiled to Burma, where he was put to death with his sons. This marked a seminal moment for Indo-Islamic consciousness, specifically for the established Muslim elites of north India, who tended to view the defeat of 1857 as the end of their political pre-eminence and the beginning of what would be a dark period of Muslim history in India.

In this situation, a group of learned theologians, led by Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi, established the Darul Uloom Seminary in the town of Deoband, a municipal board in Saharanpur district in the state of Uttar Pradesh, about 150 km from Delhi.<sup>1</sup>

The institution was established to preserve Indo-Islamic culture and to train youth in Islamic knowledge. The Darul Uloom Deoband, founded on 30th May, 1866 (1283 AH), under the advice of the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) given through a dream to Hadhrat Mawlana Qasim Nanautawi. The madrasah was started under a pomegranate tree in the Chatta Masjid. The first teacher was Mulla Mahmud Hasan Deobandi and the first student was Mahmud Hasan, who was to become famous as Shaikh ul-Hind in subsequent years. The first patron principal was Mawlana Muhammad Qasim Nanautawi. The first muhtamim (rector) was Haji Muhammad Abid Hussain and Mawlana Muhammad Yaqub was its first sardar mudarris (principal) and mufti.<sup>2</sup> The other pioneers of Darul Uloom were Mawlana Zulfiqar Ali, Mawlana Fazlur Rahman, and Mawlana Rashid Ahmad Gangohi, amongst others.<sup>3</sup>

The pedagogical philosophy of Deoband was focused on teaching revealed Islamic sciences, known as manqulat, to the Indian Muslim population, according to the Hanafi tradition.<sup>4</sup> In this seminary, Nanautawi instituted

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modern methods of learning.

Canadian Prof. W. Cantwell Smith, Director of the Department of Islamic Studies, McGill University, Montreal, Canada, writes in his book *Modern Islam in India*:

"Next to Al-Azhar of Cairo, Darul Uloom Deoband is the most important and respected theological academy of the Muslim World. Its influence and prestige throughout India are naturally large and they are all the greater for the school's long tradition and concern for the material condition of the Indian Muslims. The tradition is derived ultimately from the movement of Shah Waliullah Dehlavi and the Indian Wahabis and has expressed itself in the participation of Deobandi Ulama in various revolutionary movements such as the Ghadar of 1857 and their more recent support of Congress nationalism. Its aim is to resuscitate classical Islam, rid the Muslims of the theological corruptions; the ritual degradations and the material exploitation to which they have fallen prey since the British regime".

Who could have imagined that a madrasah started in the small town of Deoband, with only one teacher and only one student on its role, could rise to such an eminence that it would be bracketed one day with the leading Islamic university, Al-Azhar at Cairo? Within a hundred years, the Darul Uloom has produced a galaxy of eminent Muslim theologians, thinkers and scholars who have made a mark not only in the field of religion but also in the domain of politics. The first student of this seminary, Shaikh ul-Hind Mawlana Mahmud Hasan, was not only an outstanding theologian but also a great political activist who played a dominant role in the freedom struggle. The other political activist and theologian of great repute, Shaikh ul-Islam Mawlana Husain Ahmad Madani, was an alumnus of this madrasah. Mawlana Ubayadullah Sindhi, who was a great theologian, political leader and Islamic thinker, received his education at Deoband. Mawlana Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani, Mawlana Manazir Ahsan Gilani, Mawlana Muhammad Anwar Shah Kashmiri, Mawlana Mufti Kifayatullah and Mawlana Mufti Mahmud, all illustrious names in the field of theology and politics, were also products of this institute.<sup>5</sup>

One of the remarkable things about this Islamic institute is that no modern university can boast of enjoying so much academic freedom as this traditional Islamic university does. This has been possible owing to the fact that it has always refused to accept any grant, from either the central

or the provincial government. It is entirely dependent upon munificence. It is really surprising that, despite the fact that its annual budget is more than Rs 1.2 million, it manages its affairs without any assistance from the government.<sup>6</sup>

The other remarkable thing is that, unlike modern universities, it does not charge its students any fees. Lodging and food are provided to every student, whether he is rich or poor, free of charge, but one can pay voluntarily.<sup>7</sup> The students do not have to spend anything on textbooks. It is the responsibility of the institute to provide them without charge.

In its first year, Darul Uloom made a good impression and was able to enrol students even from outside India. At the end of the first year, the number of students from the vicinity of Deoband reached 78, of which 58 students were from Banaras, Punjab and Afghanistan. The total number of students in the same year was 183.<sup>8</sup> About 3500 students are currently enrolled there.

The madrasah was later shifted to Qadi ki Masjid in a rented house but, since this place proved inadequate to accommodate the increasing number of students, the madrasah authorities favoured constructing a building of their own where further extension could be made in future. On 2nd Dhul Hijja in 1292 AH (1875), after Friday prayer, the first brick of the present building of Darul Uloom was laid by Miyanji Munney.<sup>9</sup>

The Darul Uloom's teaching system follows the tradition of the Hanafi School on the pattern of Shah Waliullah Dehlawi. The degree of Fadil, awarded by Darul Uloom in Arabic studies, is recognised by Aligarh Muslim University in Aligarh, Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi, Al-Azhar University in Cairo and Madina University in Madina.<sup>10</sup>

Darul Uloom has three responsible managing bodies. One is Majlis-e-Shoora (the Supreme governing council), comprising eight members. The second is Majlis-e-Amela (executive council), consisting of nine members. The third is Majlis-i-Talimi (the academic council).<sup>11</sup> At present, it has 23 departments, which are of three categories, academic, administrative and financial. The number of subjects taught in the institute is 26. Darul Uloom has no fixed source of income. The total number of students on roll during 1982-83 was 3438. The record list of its graduates from 1866-1963 bears testimony to the fact that it has always attracted a large number of students from abroad.<sup>12</sup>



Some of the prominent theologians and political leaders produced the Darul Uloom are as follows:

1. Shaykh-ul-Hind Mawlana Mehmood-ul-Hasan
2. Imam-ul-Asar, Allamah Anwar Shah Kashmiri
3. Shaykh-ul-Islam, Allamah Shabbir Ahmad Uthmani
4. Shaykh-ul-Islam, Mawlana Husain Ahmad Madani
5. Hakeem-ul-Ummah, Mawlana Ashraf Ali Thanwi
6. Mawlana Bodrul Alam, (Second Principal of Jamia Tawakkulia Renga Madrasah), Bangladesh
7. Mawlana Abdul Haleem Rajanpuri, (Darul Uloom Usmania, Ubauro, in Northern Sindh), Pakistan
8. Mawlana Qari Abdul Rasheed Ajmeri
9. Mawlana Abdur Razzaq, Bangladesh
10. Mawlana Raza Ahmed Ajmeri
11. Shaykh Mawlana Yunus Saheb, (Lecturer of Hadeeth, Madrasah Mazahirul Uloom Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh)
12. Mufti Muhammad Shafi, (Mufti-e-Azam Pakistan)
13. Allamah Syed Muhammad Yusuf Binori
14. Mawlana Ahmad Ali Lahori
15. Mawlana Qari Muhammad Tayyab Qasmi
16. Amir-ul-Hind Mawlana Syed Asad Madani
17. Mawlana Syed Munazir Ahsan Gilani
18. Maulana Ubaidullah Sindhi
19. Maulana Ahmad Ali Lahori
20. Maulana Margoobur Rahman, (existing Vice Chancellor of Darul Uloom Deoband)

The library of Darul Uloom is one of the richest in theological and oriental literature in India, having a collection of lakh books that includes manuscripts and rare books of great value. It may be a pleasant surprise for many to know that Munshi Naval Kishore, a celebrated oriental publisher of Lucknow, donated a large number of Arabic books to this library.<sup>13</sup> It is gratifying to note that this seminary has produced a printed catalogue of the manuscripts in two volumes, edited by Mawlana Muhammad Zafeeruddin, which is very useful to research scholars in Islamic studies.<sup>14</sup>

It has facilities for training students in Unani System of Medicine. The Jamia Tibbiya Deoband prepares students to start independent practice as

hakims. Its course of study is of four years' duration and, after completion of this course, the degree of Fazil-ut-Tib is awarded, which is recognised by the Government of India. The college has its own well-equipped laboratory and dispensary. It also has other departments, such as Darul-Sanayah and Darul-Ifta. Darul-Ifta, which is concerned with the issuing of fatwas, has been doing very useful work. Darul Uloom also provides facilities for vocational training in arts and crafts, e.g. calligraphy, tailoring, book-binding, etc.

The Darul Uloom publishes two journals, *Darul Uloom* in Urdu and *Ad-Dai* in Arabic. It has also a literary society, Alnadi-ul-Adabi, the main objective of which is to encourage students to learn modern Arabic.<sup>15</sup>

### **Transnational network of Deobandi institutions**

From very first day, many foreign students enrolled in Deoband. In the opening year, 12 of its 183 students were foreigners. These foreign students established madrasahs affiliated to Deoband on return to their homelands. This caused the expansion of the Deobandi School abroad. The expansion of the geographical scope of the Deoband School appears to correlate, without any particular plan or intention on behalf of the school, with the vicissitudes of political and religious life in the countries concerned. The transnational network of Deobandi institutions seems to have evolved from a largely Indo-Pakistani background into a cross-cultural religious revival and missionary movement that is starting increasingly to harness modern resources for its ends. The international Deobandi institutions have become so strong that they no longer seem to require a significant input of Deoband graduates in order to function. The network has reached the stage of an independent self-propelled mode of operation and growth.<sup>16</sup>

Unfortunately, efforts at transnational institutional collaboration have been significantly stifled since the late 1990s. Personal connections and inner-Deobandi networking outside South Asia seem to have become more important. The Deobandi institutional network overlaps with the traditional Sufi relationship of spiritual guide and disciple (Shaykh-Khalifa).<sup>17</sup> The independent but related network of Tablighi centres seems to feed into Deobandi networking more strongly since the 1980s. Public meetings, da'wah, and tarbiyat conferences with international participation appear to play a growing role.<sup>18</sup> Academic representations of Deobandi institutions on the Internet have become more advanced. [www.darululoom-deoband.com](http://www.darululoom-deoband.com) is



the official website of Darul Uloom Deoband. The urge to maintain a presence on the Internet seems to contribute to increased transparency and a gradual modernisation of Deobandi institutions and their presentation. The online fatwa system of Darul Uloom Deoband has also been running successfully for several years. Its website is [www.darulifta-deoband.org](http://www.darulifta-deoband.org).<sup>19</sup>

The bewildering variety of international Deobandi activities makes it difficult to ascribe to this network a homogeneous quality. The impact of its activities is clearly felt across the Islamic world, everywhere Muslims live and also in the West, but the academic description and analysis of its transnational functioning and conceptualisation are only beginning now.

### **In Pakistan**

The greatest number of Deobandi Madrasahs after India is in Pakistan. The first and foremost Deobandi Madrasah is Darul Uloom Karachi. It continues the tradition of the Darul Uloom system initiated by Darul Uloom Deoband. It is one of the leading educational institutions in Pakistan and is considered to be one of the top Islamic educational institutions in the world after Al Azhar and Darul Uloom Deoband. It was started by the late Grand Mufti of Pakistan, Mufti Muhammad Shafi, in 1951. He was previously associated with Darul Uloom Deoband, where he also served as the Grand Mufti, but he moved to Pakistan following the partition.<sup>20</sup> Currently, the President of Darul Uloom Karachi is the Grand Mufti of Pakistan, Muhammad Rafi Usmani and the Vice-President is Muhammad Taqi Usmani. Both are the sons of the founder.

Many madrasahs were subsequently established in different parts of Pakistan following the Deobandi curriculum. Some of the most important of them are as follows:

1. Jamia Khir ul Madaris, Multan
2. Jamia Ashrafia, Lahore
3. Jamia Uloom-i-Sharia, Sahiwal
4. Jamia Binoria, Karachi
5. Jamia Imdadiya, Faisalabad
6. Jamia Munawwar-ul-islam
7. Jamia Rashidia, Sahiwal
8. Jamia Farooqia, Karachi
9. Daruloom Banori Town



10. Jamia Islamia, Clifton
11. Jamia Turrasheed, Karachi
12. Jamia Rozatul Fatiya
13. Jamia Hafsa, Islamabad.
14. Akora Khattak Madrassa, Akora Kattak
15. Jamia Zia-ul-Quran (bagh wali masjid), Faisalabad.

Wafaq-ul-Madaris Al-Arabia is the governing body of all Deobandi Madrasahs in Pakistan. The other organisations founded in the early 1990s such as the Association of Arabic Schools (Rabita Madaris Arabiya; RMA) and the Old Boys Association (Tanzim-e Abna-e Qadim; TAQ) gave new impetus to the administrative and organisational strengthening of the Deobandi movement.<sup>21</sup>

According to official figures of the Government of Pakistan, there are presently 11,221 madrasahs in the country. Of these, 6,148 have been registered with the provincial governments under the Society Act 1860. According to unofficial figures, there are over 20,000 Madrasahs. According to Mr. Ijazul Haq, Minister for Religious Affairs, who is the son of the late Zia, 8,000 madrasahs were being run by Deobandi organisations.<sup>22</sup>

Amongst the famous scholars of the Deobandi School outside India, Mawlana Tariq Jameel from Pakistan is a well-known and prominent member of Tablighi Jamat, a movement founded by Mawlana Muhammad Ilyas Kandhlawi. Others include, London-born Tahir Anwar, a Deobandi scholar currently residing in the San Francisco Bay Area, Azizul Huq, a scholar and a member of Islami Oikya Jote (a political party in Bangladesh), Mufti Ebrahim Desai, a mufti from Camperdown, near Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, who is well-known for running a popular fatwa website, Fazlul Huq Amini, a scholar and former member of parliament in Bangladesh and Mufti Husain Kadodia a scholar and teacher of Shari'ah (Islamic Law) from South Africa.<sup>23</sup>

### **In Bangladesh**

The first Deobandi Madrasah in Bangladesh was established by Hazrat Mawlana Arkan Ali, a graduate of Darul Uloom Deoband in 1919. The madrasah is named Jamia Tawakkulia Renga Madrasah, located in Mogla Bazar, about 13km south of district Sylhet, Bangladesh. It was later run by

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his son, Hazrat Mawlana Badrul Alam (Sheikh-e-Renga).<sup>24</sup> The present principal is Hazrat Mawlana Shamsul Islam Khalil and the vice-principal is Mawlana Muhiul Islam Burhan. It has become a hub of Deobandi activities in Bangladesh. Several new madrasahs affiliated to Deoband were established by its alumni throughout the country.

### **In the United Kingdom**

A similar pattern applies to the Deobandi schools in the United Kingdom. One Darul Uloom, in the name of the Institute of Islamic Education, is located at the Tablighi Centre in Dewsbury. The centre also organises tablighi activities throughout Europe.<sup>25</sup> Darul Uloom al-Arabiyya al-Islamiyya in Bury, Holcombe, seems to be equally involved in the Deobandi network and in tablighi activities. It was here that one of the closest disciples of Zakariyya was based, Mawlana Motala, who compiled an endorsed list of his disciples. He is said to have founded that school in 1974 at the order of his mentor. The school has created its own networks, with five other schools affiliated to it. Madrasahs in Lenasia, South Africa, and in Bradford are some other Deobandi institutions.<sup>26</sup>

According to "The Times", about 600 of Britain's nearly 1,400 mosques are run by Deobandi-affiliated scholars and 17 of the country's 26 Islamic seminaries follow Deobandi teachings, producing about 80% of all domestically-trained Muslim clerics.<sup>27</sup>

### **In Saudi Arabia**

The only Deobandi madrasah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was founded by Mawlana Zakariyya in 1873. It is situated in Mecca and named Madrasah Saulatiyyah.<sup>28</sup>

### **In South Africa**

Deobandi thought and institution-building in South Africa, as elsewhere outside South Asia, received a strong boost from the activities of the Tablighi Jamat.<sup>29</sup> Often it was a particular scholar, cleric, or holy man who started to spread the movement in countries outside India and Pakistan, and who is still revered for that. Goolam Muhammad Padia, a businessman from Umzinto on the south coast of KwaZulu Natal, popularly known as "Bhai" (brother), started its activities in South Africa in the early 1960s.<sup>29</sup>



The intensification of tablighi activities outside South Asia from about the 1960s seems to have promoted the foundation of new Deobandi mosques and schools that could serve as local centres (markaz) for the Tablighi Jamat. The battle for control over mosques between Deobandis and Barelvis that started in Pakistan and partly in India in the late 1970s and 1980s, coinciding with the Islamisation politics of the regime of General Zia-ul-Haq, was replicated in countries such as South Africa. There, it was fought in the name of the tablighi versus the Sunni paradigm, signifying the growing influence of the Tablighi Jamat and the countervailing activities of the "Sunni Jamat", representing the Barelvis.

The descendents of the Jamat founders, Muhammad Ilyas, who was its amir, and Muhammad Zakariyya, who was the latter's nephew and wrote its major reference book on doctrine, *Fazail-e Amal*, directly control several of the Deobandi Madrasahs outside South Asia. It is, however, the network of disciples of the more spiritually inclined Mawlana Zakariyya that stands at the back of much of Deobandi activity outside India. The longest such connection exists with the Madrasah Saulatiyya in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. After Zakariyya's visit to Lenasia in South Africa in 1983, a new madrasah was founded, which today is known as the Darul Uloom Zakariyya. Others, such as Madrassah Inaamiyyah Camperdown, near Durban and one in Azadville, were founded by his disciples. Until recently, tablighi activity was part of the curriculum there. The school in Lenasia is also the national centre of tablighi activity. It needs also to be mentioned here that many of the associates of Zakariyya hail from Gujarat and belong to Muslim trading groups there.<sup>31</sup> This is true for South Africa, as much as for Britain. Their relative prosperity in both countries (as compared to other Muslim migrants) gives the Islamic schools there a certain middle-class flavour mostly absent from the South Asian subcontinent's madrasahs.

### **In Malaysia**

In Malaysia, the Islamic school at the national headquarters of the Tablighi Jamat in Kuala Lumpur, Sri Petaling, was established by Deobandi graduates from South Asia. It started functioning in 1995, teaching the alim course on the basis of the Deobandi curriculum, where the legal subjects of the Hanafi code were replaced with those of the local Shaf'i code. The first batch of students graduated in 2005.<sup>32</sup> The Tablighi Jamat is planning to set up Deobandi schools at all regional centres in Malaysia.

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